

# WILD TIMES

KIDS MAGAZINE

WINTER 2019

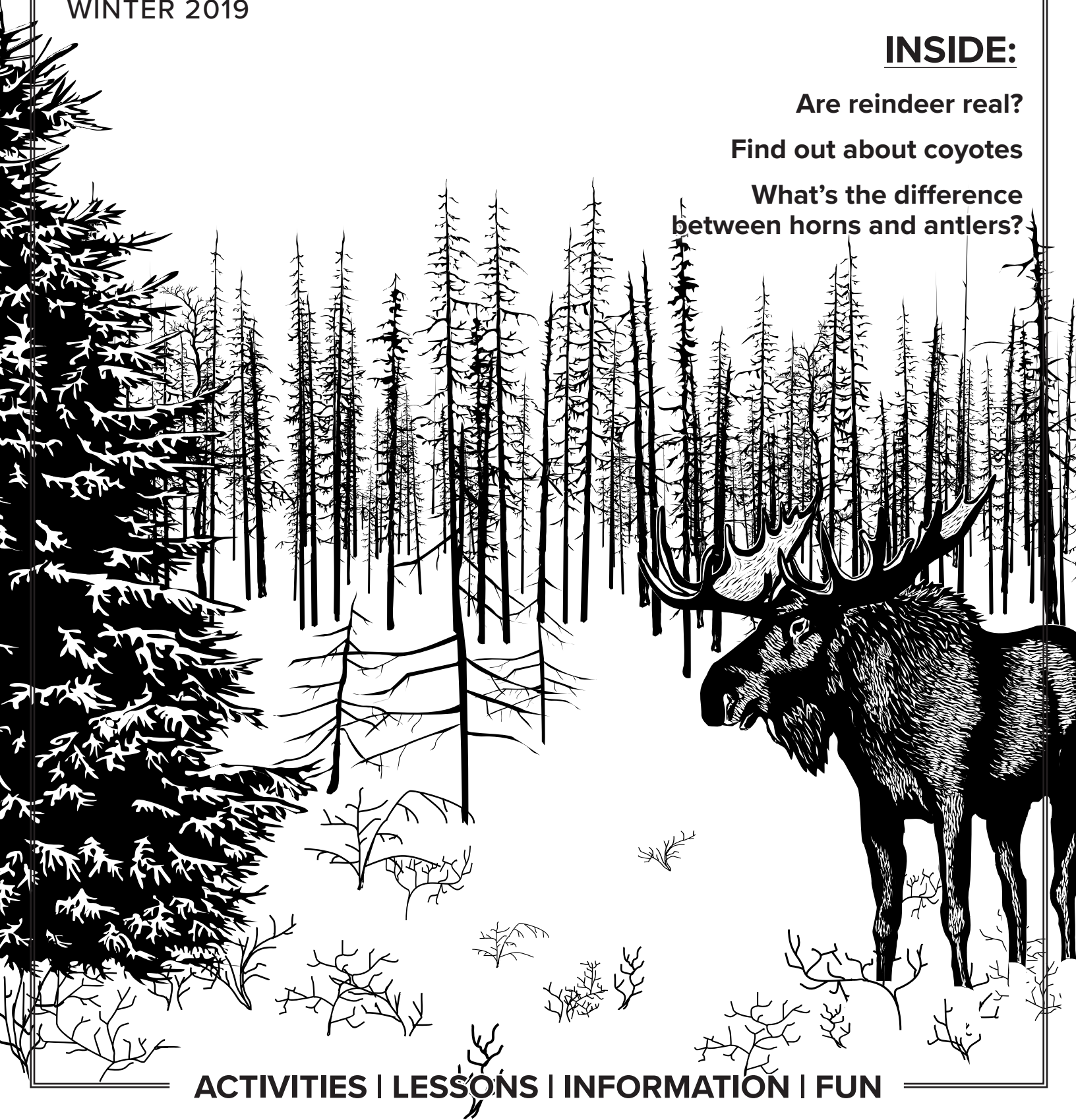


## INSIDE:

Are reindeer real?

Find out about coyotes

What's the difference  
between horns and antlers?



ACTIVITIES | LESSONS | INFORMATION | FUN

## Are reindeer real?

Yes, they are! Reindeer is what people in Europe call the animal that we call a caribou in North America. Reindeer/caribou live in Canada, Alaska, Greenland and across northern Europe and Asia. Caribou are related to the deer we have in Wyoming, like cousins. The reason we do not have caribou in Wyoming is because they live in a different habitat. They need a tundra where the soil is almost always frozen and cool, thick northern forests.

Caribou are the only member of the deer family where both males and females can grow antlers. The moose, mule deer, elk and white-tailed deer that live in Wyoming only grow antlers if they are male.

In northern Europe they were used to pull sleds. All over, they are hunted for their meat and pelts, just like their deer family cousins in Wyoming.





*Left: A white-tailed deer antler was shed in a stream. Right: A large herd of elk winter together in Wyoming.*

## The basics of shed hunting

Did you know that members of the deer family (moose, elk and deer in Wyoming) lose their antlers each year? It is similar to you losing a tooth and growing in an adult tooth, but they grow back new antlers each and every spring. Shed antler “hunting” is a great winter and spring outdoor family activity. If you do go out looking for some shed antlers or have other adventures outdoors in the wintertime, it is important to try and give wildlife such as deer and elk lots of space. They may be nearby trying

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their hardest to survive the winter, and many animals like to keep their distance from people. If humans come hiking through their winter homes, they will have to spend a lot of energy running away into deeper snow. This could make it very hard for them to make it through the winter. To protect wintering big game, it is best to wait

until spring to go shed antler hunting or until wintering herds leave the area. In some places it is required that you wait until then, and the lands are closed to humans to help wildlife. Be sure and contact a game warden or Game and Fish regional office for more information if you plan to go out on an adventure looking for some antlers.

# WILDLIFE PROFILES



## Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

**Range:** Coyotes live all over the state of Wyoming as well as throughout North America.

**Size:** In Wyoming, adult male coyotes average 35 pounds and females are slightly smaller.

**Habitat:** Coyotes are found almost everywhere, from mountains and forests to deserts and plains, even cities and towns! They are very good at finding what they need to survive in many different habitats.

**Young:** Coyotes breed between January-March and give birth to six or seven pups about two months later. Both of the parents help care for the pups, teaching them how to hunt and survive on their

own until the fall.

**Predators:** Humans are a main predator of coyotes, as their soft winter pelts are valuable. Coyotes also are sometimes killed by mountain lions, bears and wolves.

**Food:** Coyotes are not picky. They will eat any small animal they can capture, including mice, rats, gophers, mountain beavers, rabbits, squirrels, snakes, lizards, frogs, fish and birds. They will also sometimes eat carrion, which is another name for meat from another animal that is already dead.

**Did you know?** Grasshoppers and other insects are important to young coyotes learning the stalk-and-pounce method of hunting.

# WILDLIFE PROFILES



## White-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*)

**Range:** The white-tailed jackrabbit is native to western and central North America, including Wyoming.

**Size:** The white-tailed jackrabbit is a large rabbit, weighing between 5.5 and 9.5 pounds. It is 22 to 26 inches long.

**Habitat:** It is mostly found in the plains and prairie areas, but can also be found in mountain meadows up to 10,000 feet in elevation.

**Young:** About five baby jackrabbits are born in a nest that the mother lines with her own fur. Baby white-tailed jackrabbits weigh about a quarter of a pound and are born with their eyes open. They only stay with their mother

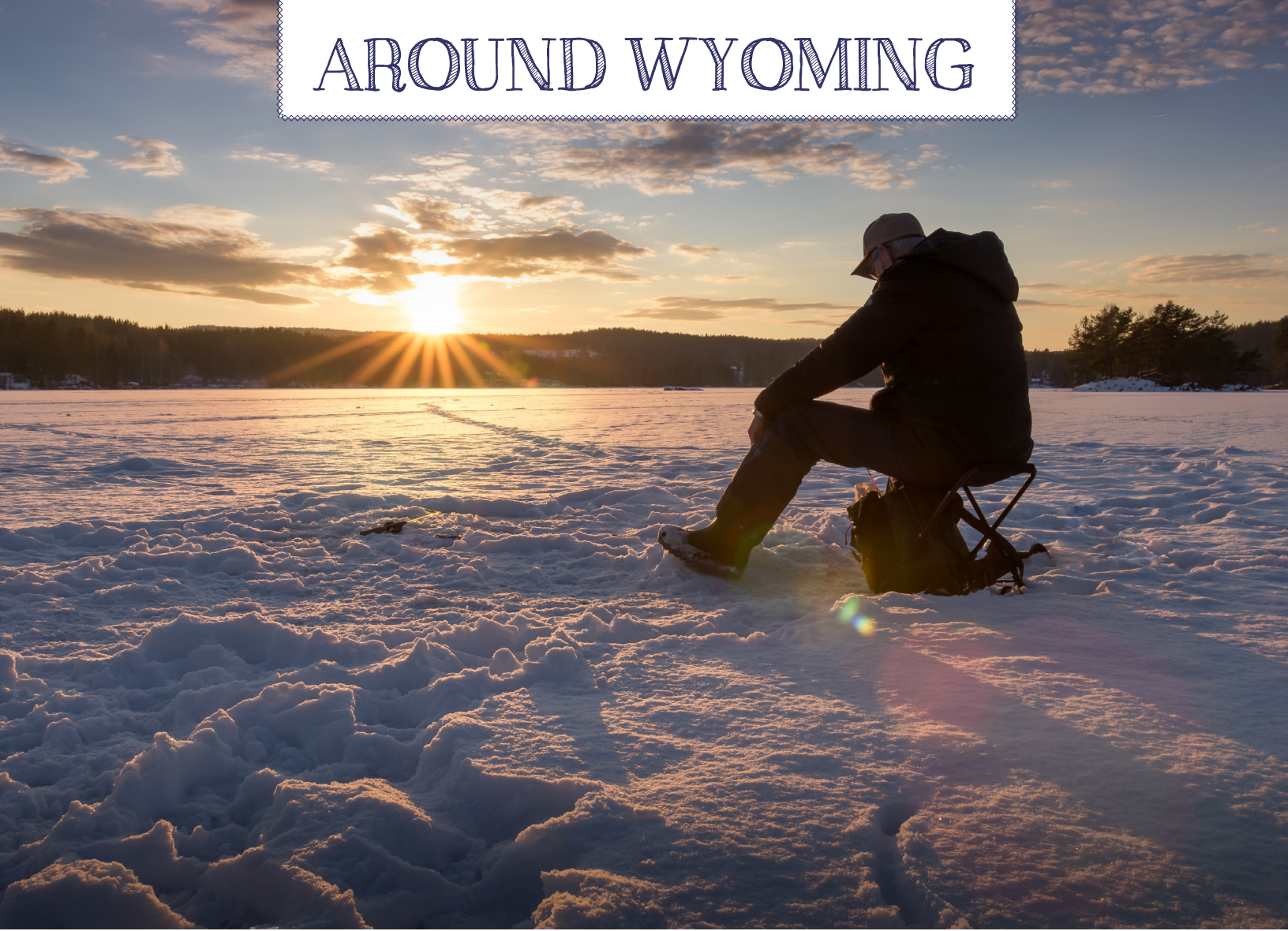
for about four weeks before they head out on their own.

**Predators:** The white-tailed jackrabbit is an important prey animal for many predators including badgers, coyotes, bobcats, eagles, hawks and owls. Young are sometimes eaten by snakes.

**Food:** In the summer it eats grasses and other green plants and during the winter its diet includes buds, twigs and bark from bushes and plants close to the ground.

**Did you know?** In the winter, white-tailed jackrabbits turn white except for black tips on their ears. In the summer they are brown.

# AROUND WYOMING



*If you decide to go ice fishing alone, make sure to tell someone where you are going and when you will be back.*

## How to safely enjoy ice fishing

There are lots of places around Wyoming that you can ice fish in the winter. With ice conditions around the state changing each week, you should always keep safety in mind while enjoying your time in the outdoors. Bobby Compton, the Laramie region fisheries supervisor, gave you this advice to be safe while ice fishing:

- The safest way to ice fish is with another person. If you are heading out on the ice alone, tell someone where you're headed and when you plan to be back.

**Make sure you are fishing on safe ice that is at least 4 inches thick. Never fish on ice that has been broken and refrozen.**

- Going to a lake that has other people fishing at it too is a good idea, just in case you need help.
- Someone who is with you should bring a fully charged cell phone. Putting it in a plastic zipper bag will make sure it does not get wet.
- Make sure you are fishing on safe ice that is at least 4 inches thick. Never

fish on ice that has been broken and refrozen.

- Wear a life jacket and carry ice picks in case of an emergency.
- Bring an emergency blanket and an extra set of dry clothes with you.
- Never let anyone drive a car, truck, four wheeler or snowmobile onto the ice.

# OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



*An elk after recently shedding its antlers.*

## Horns and antlers: Know the difference

Do you know the difference between a horn and an antler?

Antlers are grown and shed each year by most male deer, elk and moose. Antlers are made out of bone, and grow faster than almost any other creature's tissue. Animals with antlers grow new ones each year, beginning in the late spring. New antlers are covered in a soft furry skin called "velvet." In late summer and early fall, the antlers harden and the animal will rub off the velvet on shrubs and trees. Finally, in the late fall and early winter, the entire antler is shed off and new antlers begin to grow very soon after the old ones shed off. It doesn't hurt the animal to lose their antlers!

Unlike antlers, true horns are a bone core covered in a sheath made of keratin. Keratin is what your fingernails and hair are made of. Sheep, goats, bison and domestic cattle all have horns. Both males and females can have horns, and they do not branch out like antlers. Horns are not shed off like antlers are. Horns continue to grow the animal's entire life. Pronghorn are the exception to these rules. They have a branched keratin horn sheath over a bone core and this horn sheath is shed and replaced occasionally.



### BIGHORN SHEEP HORN

- Bone core covered by a sheath
- Sheath made out of keratin
- Horns do not usually shed off

### ELK ANTLER

- Made out of bone
- Grow new antlers each year
- Antlers shed off in late fall to early winter



### ANTLER IN VELVET

- Made out of bone
- New antlers are covered in a furry skin
- Antlers harden in late summer and early fall
- Deer rub the velvet off on trees and shrubs

# TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

## DO THESE ANIMALS HAVE HORNS OR ANTLEERS?



WHITE-TAILED DEER



BIGHORN SHEEP



MULE DEER



MOUNTAIN GOAT



ELK



BISON



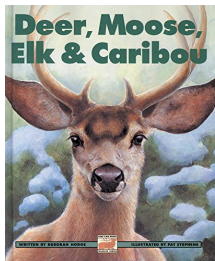
PRONGHORN

### Answers:

Answers: mountain goat=horn; mule deer=antler; white-tailed deer=antler; elk=antler; bison=horn; bighorn sheep=horn; pronghorn=horn

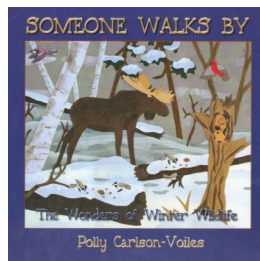
## LEARNING LINKS

### Books to check out



#### Deer, Moose, Elk & Caribou by Deborah Hodge

Did you know that less than a week after it is born a baby deer can run faster than a human? Or that in a day, a moose eats as many as 90 big salad bowls of greens? Simple straightforward text and realistic detailed illustrations explain where and how deer live, how they give birth, what they eat, anatomy and much more.



#### Someone Walks By by Polly Carlson-Voiles

Someone is walking through the north woods in winter. Readers can see the tracks in each detailed depiction of winter habitat, but they don't discover the mystery animal until the last pages. On the way, they see frozen wood frogs, a bear in her den with her newborn cubs, sleepy chipmunks and many other creatures surviving and even thriving in the cold, snowy winter environment.



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